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ABSTRACT

Guidelines for implementing a multi-source approach to funding child care programs are offered in this paper. The funding plan discussed consists of five steps: (1) building a climate of acceptance, (2) documenting the need for funds, (3) establishing realistic short- and long-term goals, (4) identifying possible funding sources and their special interests and political frameworks, and (5) making coalitions with individuals and groups with common concerns and interests. The methods of raising funds and sources of funding described in this paper have been developed successfully in several states, in urban and small town settings, and in Head Start, day care, and nursery schools. While these programs were non-profit, it is suggested that some aspects of the plan can be used by proprietary centers. (RH)

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MULTI-SOURCE FUNDING FOR CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

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It has never been easy to get, and to keep, the funding for good child care. The present political climate and an inflationary economy have increased the difficulty, yet the need for child care is greater than ever before. The responsibility for this problem falls chiefly on the already overburdened shoulders of child care directors, who are usually more comfortable when working with parents and children than when dealing with funding problems. Frequently programs begin with one or two sources of funding. As these funding sources continue to be tapped, they can become exhausted, i.e.: how much more can parents' fees be raised? Therefore one key to solving financial problems is to increase the number of funding sources contributing to a program, a practice known as multi-source funding.

Multi-source funding offers many advantages. It can be developed step by step over an extended period of time. By providing a broader base of support, centers are less vulnerable to cuts than when dependent on one or two sources of funding. Multi-source funding provides for more program flexibility, since all decisions do not have to be based on rules or restrictions associated with some funds, such as Title XX. In addition, multi-source funding can be used to add resources to programs that would be impossible or improbable under most funding available for general operating expenses.

There are two general types of multi-source funding: (1) more money and (2) donations of services, personnel, equipment and materials which usually cost money. The most difficult to get is the hard cash. Donations which are consistent and predictable year after year are more valuable than sporadic, unpredictable generosity. The establishment of stable year to year budget support should be the main emphasis in a multi-source approach to funding.

The methods of raising funds and the sources of funding described in this article have been developed successfully in several states, in urban and small town settings, in Head Start, day care, and nursery schools. All programs were non-profit, but some aspects of the process can be used by proprietary centers.

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The Plan

1. Build community understanding and good will toward the service you are providing.

2. Document the need.

3. Establish realistic short term and long term goals.

4. Determine the groups that are funding activities in your community, and find out as much as possible about their special interests and political framework. (Even small church groups have a political framework.)

5. Expand coalition efforts in your community to seek broader support for child care funding increases.

The Process

1. Building a climate of acceptance

Day care programs do not have a high priority in most communities and associations are often negative: "baby sitting", "undermining the family", etc. The first task in successful fund raising is to create a positive community understanding and acceptance of quality child care. Since such a campaign usually has to be managed by staff, parents and board, it needs to be well paced, realistic, and long range so that goals can be steadily and efficiently pursued. (Efforts should not spurt heroically and then stop, leaving people exhausted and reluctant to continue.) Included in the planning should be media exposure, presentations to church and community groups, displays in community centers, and liason with key and influential people in the community.

Good photographs of children are essential. Possible sources are local camera clubs, high school or college photography classes, newspaper photographers looking for human interest, and skillful amateur photographers among your supporters. Slide shows that provide enjoyable informal glimpses of the many dimensions of a good program are invaluable in the effort to offset negative propaganda. Newspapers give articles better coverage if accompanied by an appealing black and white glossy picture of children. Displays in the community attract more attention and positive reaction when they feature pictures of happy children involved in interesting activities.

Another way to improve the image is to share some of the results of children's work and play. Creative art makes a colorful, attractive display in a mall or store window. Flowers grown by the children can be shared with nursing home patients or children in hospitals. Bird feeders can be added to city parks or streets. Children's gardening or cooking efforts can be shared with neighbors or center visitors. Try to have newspaper or TV coverage for some of these events or film them for your slide shows but don't exploit the children. Sharing should be fun for them, not a burden.

It is important to talk with as many politicians, educators, and business leaders as possible. Try to provide information and/or a program for every organization in your area that influences your support over a two or three year period. A day care coalition invites local and state politicians to a cocktail party every year. They also invite politicians to lunch at centers during the "Week of the Young Child". A community service organization publishes information about child care, "Finding Child Care Solutions", in cooperation with child care providers in that city, and makes it available to other organizations.

Among the most successful approaches to community leaders have been fund raising dinners held in historic or charming settings. "Invitations" were handwritten (with cost indicated as a "donation requested"). China and linens were borrowed. Small round tables had informed hosts at each. Food was excellent, followed by short well-produced slide shows. Brochures were available with more information and pledge cards. Guests represented different segments of the community at each dinner: members of the school board and school officials, mayor and city council, business leaders, civic leaders, church leaders, faculty of the local colleges, etc. People not normally interested in child care came for a good dinner in pleasant surroundings. People with busy schedules were intrigued by the attractive invitations and the prospect of an enjoyable evening. The dinners were held several times a year and as the reputation grew, people actually asked to be included.

The money for tickets for these dinners was almost clear profit since most of the food, wine and help was donated by parents, staff, board, center volunteers, college students, community supporters, and their families. No volunteer had to spend more than one hour per dinner: one group set tables, one group brought appetizers, one group served the meal, another group brought dessert and another came to clean up. Center cooks prepared the main courses and were paid.

Those who were invited but could not come often sent donations. Money, equipment, materials, and services were donated subsequently as a result of pledges by those attending. More importantly, the dinners resulted in people in positions of influence over possible funding sources being more informed about and supportive of child care programs. Invitations to lunch or to visit at the center have also been very successful and sometimes have followed the dinners or other community meetings.

Although donations were received as a result of these events, the major purpose was to educate the community about what the program was doing. Formal fund raising approaches to the organizations represented came later.

2. Documenting the need

As you meet with the community, well organized factual information wins respect. General statements are not effective. In order to produce the facts readily, you need to keep very good and complete records. This will be even more important when you prepare proposals and ask for funds.

Be specific about what you are doing and why you need help. Share profiles of your families (without names or identifying characteristics): How are you meeting their needs? Where do they live and work? How much do they pay you on your sliding fee scale and how much does it really cost you to provide service for them? How many families are on your waiting list? (Keep a log of phone calls requesting service that you can not provide.) How much have costs risen? What do you need and why?

In order to approach businesses, industries, colleges or universities with requests, you need to know the facts about the service you are providing (or could provide) for their employees/students/faculty. You also need data about the benefits that an organization will receive when secure and reliable child care is available such as less absenteeism, job retention, and the ability to concentrate more fully on job responsibilities. Prepare for presentations to these and other groups by trying to anticipate questions and concerns. Agree to disagree about some things and try to find common ground. Don't push too hard for acceptance. Keep communication open and give time for possible changes of attitudes.

3. Be realistic about short range goals. Keep working for quality and growth in long range goals.

Examine each possibility without optimism or pessimism. Plan time and energy and don't expect too much too soon. This year try for one piece of big muscle equipment, but plan to have a new playground in five years. Build an ever widening pyramid of support, a broader base. Don't expect everyone to do everything and don't try to do everything yourself! Such dedication results in "burn out". Success breeds success: try for attainable small goals that lead to measurable progress toward long range needs. This way you keep the "troops" inspired and win new friends and allies.

The amount of time spent on any one project should be somewhat commensurate with the gain. Two months of intensive effort on a rummage sale that nets $200 is not as worthwhile as the same amount of effort on an event that nets $2,000, or on a campaign to get a community development grant for $15,000.

Try to get on the regular budget of each organization you approach or get a long-term commitment (five year renewable). The establishment of regular year to year support makes everything easier and more secure. If an organization tells you that they will be unable to continue their support, submit a proposal anyway and firmly but respectfully present the need for continued or increased support. The results are usually positive.

4. Determine possible funding sources and the political framework of each

What has each organization funded in the past? What is the time-table for preparation of their budget? Who belongs to the organization and how are decisions made? What interests and concerns do they have that might make them support or oppose child care? Possible sources of such information

include public libraries, foundation libraries, community and college development offices, publications of each organization, and direct contact with members of the organization.

The two major categories of support are public (government) and private. With the present political situation in Washington, most providers expect less support for child care from the federal government, but political strength and aggressive pursuit often pay unexpected dividends. Don't assume failure. It's still worth a try.

a. Government sources

Title XX

Each state has its own plan for distribution of these federal funds which are used to pay for all or part of a family's child care costs. Contracts must be negotiated. Well written proposals and documentation of need are crucial. Title XX will be part of state block grants.

Head Start

In addition to the half day programs, Head Start funds some day care. Get in touch with your area regional Head Start office for information about submitting proposals. This may be an expanding program with a possible focus on full-time care.

Block Grants

States are receiving Block Grants from the Federal Government. It will be up to state government to prioritize the funds for day care and other social services.

Community Development Grants

Grants are possible in target areas with low income families or special needs. Get in touch with local government development office to check guidelines. You need a good proposal and political support.

Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation

BVR will help pay the salaries of disabled persons if you agree to train them. Programs have had teachers, teacher assistants, office workers and cooks with disabilities. Their subsidized employment has had benefits for everyone involved. Also BVR will pay for day care if parent is eligible. Call them.

County and local governments

In the past, government units have supplied space, health services, nutrition assistance, recreation programs and help with ecology problems and resources. Find out through county agencies what is available.

Public schools

Local school districts have supplied bus service, space, utilities, equipment, business administration, computer services, maintenance, ordering of supplies, food service, sharing of audio visual materials and equipment, in-service for staff, volunteers from classes, work-study students, repairs and building of equipment by industrial arts classes, services of professionals for screening or testing, recreation facilities, program materials and services from teacher centers, and library services.

Colleges and universities (may be government or privately funded)

Higher education has provided operating expenses, staff salaries (for campus related programs), space, utilities, maintenance, equipment, business administration, work-study students, and professional services. Contributions have been made to centers that served only campus populations, or to community centers that had some children of campus personnel or to community centers that provided field experiences for students. Occasionally, colleges and universities have given donations to centers as community contributions without any direct benefit to the campus. College departments which have offered financial support include: education, child development, psychology, student services, community services, home economics. These disciplines have also provided consultant help from faculty and staff, student volunteers, services, materials, equipment and other resources.

Many college departments have been involved in other ways. A communications class studied a false and misleading propaganda assault on child care and planned a rebuttal to it as a class project. Music, art, dance and theater departments have provided experiences, volunteers, and materials. Other contributions have come from: physical education programs, library science/technology, medical/dental programs, journalism, photography, law, social services, sociology, religion, humanities, speech and hearing, urban affairs, and business administration. Clubs, fraternities/sororities, professional organizations, and senior classes have all contributed money, time, services, and equipment. A science fraternity contributed money so that every classroom in a center could have science and math materials suitable for young children. They also conducted staff inservice and volunteered time with the children in special projects. Students in architecture and art have designed and built playgrounds. A book co-op donated money for a library in a center. Students and faculty from law and political science are valuable board members. Get in touch with faculty members, student organizations, department heads.

b. Private or non-government sources

United Way is one of the largest private sources of funds for child care programs. Many get support because they are associated with United Way supported agencies. However, independent programs can become United Way supported if they apply and present a proposal that is accepted. You must demonstrate a value and need to the community. Political support helps. Also check to determine if you can affiliate with United Way without being funded, it is a first step.

Churches offer a variety of resources for child care that are well known: space, utilities, maintenance, equipment. However, programs have also benefited from becoming a line item in church budgets, sometimes for a specific budget need such as transportation or educational supplies, sometimes in exchange for help with church programming. For example, three-fourths salary of the director ($18,000) has been paid by a church if that director also directs the church nursery school and the Sunday school. Groups within churches (women's groups, couple's clubs, senior citizen groups) have also made contributions to general operating funds or for specifics such as books, tuition for staff training, equipment.

Businesses, industries

Interest in child care on business sites as an employee benefit is growing. Since it is expensive and complex for a business to provide its own child care, businesses have given financial support to existing programs that serve their employees, from $100 to $48,000 a year. In-kind services such as maintenance, space, utilities, repairs, building of equipment, donations of equipment and materials, transportation, business administration, accounting have also been given. Food donations have been given by food processing companies. Even without service to their employees, many businesses and industries contribute to community nonprofit organizations through a community service office or a company foundation (check with foundation board members for possibilities).

Civic organizations

Kiwanis, Rotary, Y.W.C.A., garden clubs, book clubs, city clubs, women's organizations, professional organizations, recreation groups, and arts groups are all past or present contributors to early childhood centers. They have contributed money, time, equipment and material, often to parts of the program that are of special interest to their group. Get in touch with program chairpersons and offer to present a program. Then ask the president or the appropriate committee chairperson about procedure to ask for financial support or other donations.

5. Expand coalition efforts in your community to seek broader support for child care funding increase.

There are many individuals and groups with whom child care has common concerns and interests. Women's groups, parents' groups, social service organizations, education associations, pediatricians and other medical groups, church groups, civic groups and political groups. It is important to communicate your needs to them and enlist their support.

It is also important to support their efforts in areas with which you can agree and/or areas that relate to the families and children on your program. You do not have to agree on every issue to support each other. Political strength depends on the number of citizens who are willing to attend meetings, write letters, make phone calls, make speeches and talk to friends and neighbors.

To sum it all up

Expanding funding sources means more program possibilities. The process of soliciting support from many organizations can educate the community about your program and improve your status, providing more security and stability. It also makes center staff and parents more knowledgeable about, and responsive to the community.

In a democratic society political skills are essential. Practice may not make perfect but it will help us to survive and to improve.